

November 4, 2013

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The Honorable Andy Vidak  
California State Senate  
State Capitol, Room 3082  
Sacramento, CA 95814

*Delivered via USPS and electronic mail*

Dear Senator Vidak:

Thank you for your correspondence dated November 1, 2013 regarding the location of the California High-Speed Rail Authority's (Authority) November 7, 2013 meeting. Before turning to your letter, please accept my congratulations on your election to the State Senate from the 16<sup>th</sup> District. While your public position in opposition to the high-speed rail project was clear, as the representative of the citizens of the southern San Joaquin Valley, we look forward to working with you constructively to address issues that may affect that region as we build the system.

In response to your correspondence, let me begin by clearing up a misconception that may have arisen with respect to our upcoming Board of Directors meeting on November 7, 2013. There is no "new alignment" that will be considered by our Board at that meeting. What will be before the Board is a recommendation by our staff that it convey to federal authorities a preference for one of several proposed alternatives that have long been the subject of public review.

In fact, the project's alignment alternatives have been public knowledge and remained unchanged since the issuance of the Revised Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) Fresno to Bakersfield Project Section in July 2012.

So, while staff and the Board have deliberated as to the preferred alignment among the alternatives, there will be no new alignments proposed or examined on November 7, 2013. Rather, the Board will be asked to concur with a recommended preferred alternative alignment that has been chosen based upon more than several years' worth of public input.

Since 2009, when work on the Fresno to Bakersfield Project Section Draft EIR/EIS commenced, the Authority has hosted several public outreach events in cities throughout

the alignment to garner feedback and to use the public's input to improve our plans. These events include:

- 5 Scoping Meetings (Merced, Madera, Visalia, Fresno, and Bakersfield)
- 4 Public Workshops Regarding the Release of the Draft EIR/EIS
- 3 Public Hearing for the Release of the Draft EIR/EIS
- 4 Public Workshop Regarding the Release of the Revised Draft EIR/Supplemental Draft EIS
- 3 Public Hearing for the Release of the Revised Draft EIR/Supplemental Draft EIS
- 26 Public Information Meetings
- 35 Environmental Justice Meetings
- 146 Speaking Engagements

At the Board's April 4, 2013 meeting in Fresno, staff again presented the preliminary staff recommended preferred alternative as well as all the other potential alignments and the public was given opportunity for comment. There were several hours' worth of public comment made at that meeting, which helped to shape the staff recommended alternative alignment to be presented at the November 7, 2013 meeting.

Aside from general public outreach, the Authority has solicited input from government and private sector groups representing the communities along the alignment. This includes meeting with the following entities to receive their feedback:

- City of Fresno (27 meetings)
- City of Hanford (10 meetings)
- City of Corcoran (10 meetings)
- City of Wasco (10 meetings)
- City of Shafter (7 meetings)
- City of Visalia (4 meetings)
- City of Bakersfield (10 meetings)
- Fresno County (27 meetings)
- Tulare County (4 meetings)
- Kings County (11 meetings)
- Kern County (10 meetings)
- Kern County Separation of Grades District
- 23 Water and Irrigation Districts
- 3 Flood Control Districts
- 4 School Districts
- Central California Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Allensworth Community Council
- Kern Council of Governments
- Merced County Farm Bureau
- Kern High School District
- Chinatown Revitalization Organization

To date, the Authority has received 7,872 public comments that have shaped the staff recommended preferred alternative alignment and will be included in the Final EIR/EIS, which is anticipated to be released in Spring 2014. Members of the public will continue to be able to submit their comments to the Authority as they have been for more than three years.

Beyond these public meetings and meetings with governmental entities, the Authority's staff has reached out to every property owner along the respective alignments. In some cases, Authority staff has gone door-to-door along the staff recommended alignment, meeting with property

owners to update them on the Authority's process for determining a preferred alignment and acquiring right-of-way.

Further, on June 4, 2013, I participated in a public meeting hosted by the Kings County Board of Supervisors in Hanford to review the proposed alignments with citizens of the community. Knowledgeable members of the Authority staff spent approximately two hours reviewing the alignments with high-resolution maps displaying individual property parcels.

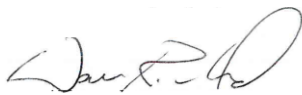
For all of the reasons above, I hope you will agree that extraordinary efforts have been made to inform not only the public in general, but individual citizens of these proposed routes.

Finally, I will note that should the Board approve staff recommendations on Thursday, the preferred alternative alignment will then be submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which in turn will initiate another public comment period. In the time leading up to Thursday's meeting and afterwards, those who are unable to attend the meeting are invited to submit comments in writing/email as they always have been. Thursday's meeting will not mark the end of this process, nor of the public's ability to participate in it.

You asked that we consider having meetings in the local area before adopting the final alignment. While I cannot commit to a specific locale at this time for future meetings, I would point out that the Authority met in Fresno on the day it deliberated and adopted the Merced to Fresno alignment in 2012. We returned to Fresno in April 2013, as noted above, when the staff updated the public on the two final alignments under consideration for the Fresno to Bakersfield portion. We will give every consideration to facilitating public involvement of those most affected once we are prepared to take that final step in certifying the Final EIR/EIS.

Thank you again for your correspondence. I look forward to working with you in the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dan Richard", with a stylized, flowing script.

Dan Richard  
Chair, Board of Directors